

## **Philippians Chapter One Study notes.**

*Verses one and two:* Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's Holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons <sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wants the church at Philippi to know that this letter is addressed to them, all God's Holy people. He deliberately singles out overseers and deacons or Elders and deacons for special mention. Paul is deliberately using the words grace and peace. Grace meaning the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and peace to mean the blessing of reconciliation that's has resulted from God's gracious work on their behalf.

By using these two words Paul has cleverly introduced elements of the letter that he will go onto expand as to what it means to put the interests of others ahead of our own. By calling them all God's Holy People (or Saints in other translations) implies their unity will become a major emphasis in this letter.

*Verses three to eight:* <sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.<sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. <sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Paul introduces the main theme of this letter - Joy. He will go on to use this word fourteen times in this letter, more than any other letter he writes. Partnership means more than just fellowship or sharing. It carries the idea of practical support.

*Verse 6* <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. So, Paul expresses his Joy towards the Philippians because they have supported him but also that he acknowledges that God is at work in their life as a church. *Verses 7-8* are a very personal response from Paul. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. <sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. Here Paul reinforces his deep love for this church.

*Verses 9-11* are a prayer of intercession.<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. What a great prayer of intercession for this church. Intercession is standing in the gap for someone else in prayer. It's allowing the needs of others to take preference over your personal needs.

Charles Ringma in his small book *Dare to Journey* says this about prayer;  
*In prayer not only the mind but the heart must speak. Our true feelings must be expressed. Our heartfelt questions must be levelled at our creator. Our doubts must be brought out in the open. Our disappointments and concerns must be spoken. Prayer has nothing to do with politeness. It is not simply a fireside chat. It is often the cry of the heart. It is the speech of passion.*

*It is the occasion where our doubts and hopes, our fear and faith mingle together as we pour out what bothers us and what we long for. The speech of the heart is not always quiet, affirming and nurturing. It is sometimes full of anguish. But it cries for answers. It looks for relief. It is born of hope not of anger. It is born of pain not of bitterness. It springs from a relationship that is strong enough to deal with the hard and real issues and its does not need to hide anything because it fears rejection. But it is not any and every prayer that heals. It is the prayer of the heart, the prayer of openness, the prayer that cries out to the Lord that brings relief, peace and healing. Prayer heals not just the answer to prayer.*

*Verses 12-18; <sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. <sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.*

Someone said that you can't really understand this letter unless you hear the clinking of Paul's chains as he writes. Firstly, Paul is saying boldly that his imprisonment has not stopped his mission and the gospel. It has actually served to advance the gospel. This would have been a surprise to the church that were very concerned about him.

Paul reports that the Gospel has swept through those who live and work in Paul's environment. This has encouraged others to be stronger in sharing the Gospel. This would have been particularly encouraging for the church to hear as they suffered persecution for their faith. Secondly Paul is rather sensationally saying that in spite of selfish ambition and false motives and attempts to make Paul's life even harder while he is in prison, the Gospel is preached.

However, he does offer a warning in this letter about those who preach a false gospel. So yes, he is happy with the Gospel being preached by those with dubious motives but be wary of those who teach incorrect theology. Paul's main point is that all human circumstances lie in God's hands and God uses them to advance the Gospel.

*Philippians 1: 19-26:* <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Paul continues to report on his own personal circumstances. Paul believes that God will use the Philippians prayers for him while he is in captivity to help him, persevere with "sufficient courage" and ultimately stand before God as one of his redeemed people. The phrase the 'spirit of Christ' suggests that the presence of the spirit will be supplied to Paul through the prayers of the Philippians. In some mysterious way these prayers are linked with God's furnishing of the spirit to him and together they will help him to face the Roman Tribunal with the courage he needs at that time.

Paul acknowledges that his circumstances are out of his hands. However, the Apostle knows that's despite appearances God is still Sovereign over the affairs of his life. Paul, rather brilliantly while commenting on his own struggles is also teaching this new church about the faith they will need as they suffer persecution.

Paul is clear here the spirit dwells in every believer and while we all have the spirit within us, sometimes we experience the spirit's presence in greater power and abundance than at other times. Also, we should pray for and expect the spirit to come in abundance on those who are suffering. For Paul, he hopes that the spirit's abundant presence will lead him to bear courageous and clear testimony to the gospel. Whether he is spared or executed by the Roman authorities "Christ will be exalted" (v 20)

The other key point here is that Paul's relationship with Christ is so close that's his entire existence derives its Meaning from his Lord. Paul's Joy and hope is not connected to his personal circumstances but with the advancement of the Gospel. This is only possible for Paul because Christ lives within him and gives him strength. Rival preachers are attacking him but what does it matter as long as Christ is preached. For Paul, Life is always centred on Christ whether he lives or dies he will be with Christ. However, he believes that he will live as he is convinced that the Philippians need his guidance in order to grow in their faith.

For Paul and for us life means Christ no matter what else happens, others' opinions about him, his position with respect to the secular authorities and the question of whether he lives or dies are moulded by his commitment to the advancement of the gospel". Paul fully expects God to show up but he knows God often intervenes in unexpected ways.

*Verses 27-30* <sup>27</sup> Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel <sup>28</sup> without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, <sup>30</sup> since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Many of the church at Philippi were struggling with their new Christian life. It was incompatible with Roman values. Paul sometimes boasts about his weaknesses afflictions and sufferings. He believes strongly that the Gospel is an unstoppable force and he knows God will find a way through even if that way is hard. *In 2 Corinthians 12:10*, he says, “So, when I am weak, then I am strong”. Paul would say my shackles have not held me back, they have been conductors of Gods power.

So, what does Paul expect the church at Philippi to do. To stand firm in one spirit and strive together for the Gospel. Don't be frightened by any opposition and never doubt the power of the gospel. Also, Paul encourages us to do this work together. Sometimes we think of Paul as a lone ranger type of Apostle. The truth is he was constantly surrounded by colleagues, friends, and ministry partners.